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The situation in the Middle East

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Security Council
Fifty-seventh year

Letter dated 13 August 2002 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I wish to draw your attention to the latest deadly act of Palestinian terrorism directed against Israel.

On Saturday evening, at approximately 10.30 p.m. (local time), a Palestinian terrorist infiltrated the community of Mechora and shot to death Yafit Herenstein, age 31, at her home. Yafit's husband, Arno, who was alerted to the infiltration and rushed to the family's home, sustained serious gunshot wounds. The couple has two young daughters, ages 2 and 14 months, both whom were asleep in the house at the time of the attack and were unhurt. The Al Aqsa Brigades, the terrorist wing of Chairman Arafat's own Fatah faction, claimed responsibility.

Israel holds the Palestinian Authority and its Chairman responsible for this latest attack. While cynically paying lip service to the global campaign against terrorism, the Palestinian leadership continues to refuse to take even the most basic steps to bring an end to terrorism. In clear violation of its signed commitments, as well as resolutions of the Security Council, the Palestinian Authority has failed to confiscate illegal weapons, cease the relentless incitement to violence in the official Palestinian media and end the celebration and glorification of acts of mass murder.

Rather the Palestinian leadership has continued its policy of both active and tacit support for terrorism by providing moral and logistical support to terrorist organizations and by assuring free passage and safe harbour to known terrorist operatives. Moreover, while purporting to condemn acts of terrorism, it continues to justify certain attacks as acts of "legitimate resistance". On numerous occasions, most recently in the course of the resumed tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly on 5 August 2002, the Palestinian Observer explicitly argued that

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some Palestinian attacks are legitimate under international law. The Palestinian Observer apparently believes that the premeditated murder of innocent civilians, including women and children, is acceptable so long as it is committed in the West Bank or Gaza. He would be well served to bear in mind the words of the Secretary-General before the General Assembly on 1 October 2001: "There can be no acceptance of those who would seek to justify the deliberate taking of innocent civilian life, regardless of cause or grievance" (see A/56/PV.12, p. 3).

In the light of the Palestinian position, Israel is left with no choice but to continue to take the measures necessary to protect its citizens from the constant threat of terrorist activity. Such measures, while unable to prevent every attempted action, have successfully thwarted dozens of attacks and have kept the civilian death toll from rising far higher.

Israel calls upon the international community to unequivocally condemn Palestinian attacks against Israeli civilians as well as the ongoing support for these attacks provided by the Palestinian leadership. Israel further calls upon the Palestinian leadership to take action, in accordance with its legal and moral obligations, to prevent its territory from serving as a base for attacks on civilian targets. Progress towards peace and the fulfilment of the needs and aspirations of both sides will only be possible once genuine efforts are made to bring an end to the illegal and unjustifiable murder of innocent Israeli civilians.

I submit this letter in follow-up to numerous letters detailing the campaign of Palestinian terrorism that began in September 2000.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of this letter circulated as a document of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 42 and 166, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Aaron **Jacob**
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.